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ABSTRACT

As part of a series exploring effective strategies for school improvement and dropout prevention, this monograph focuses on early childhood education and reading/writing programs, and compiles strategies to help families engage in meaningful literacy activities. The monograph describes and defines family literacy, provides a research basis for family literacy programs, and offers strategies for family literacy. Following an introduction outlining reasons for the phenomenal growth in family literacy programs and elaborating on the overlap between literacy, family literacy, and emergent literacy, the monograph presents examples of literacy activities in home and institutional settings to illustrate the individual nature of family literacy. The monograph's rationale and research basis for family literacy activities focuses on families' influence on children's literacy, factors promoting family literacy, reading and writing materials in the home, daily routines supporting literacy, regular writing routines, and environmental print in the home. Assessment strategies are delineated to assist families in determining if they are involved in authentic family literacy activities. The monograph next describes characteristics of homes that support family literacy and emphasizes that parents of all ethnic backgrounds, education levels, and socioeconomic status can be successful in creating effective literacy environments. Suggestions for reading to children from infancy through primary school age are included. The benefits of intergenerational and culturally diverse literacy programs are also detailed. Finally, the monograph notes that when teachers bond with parents in their classrooms, opportunities for family literacy events unfold and offers strategies for building parent-school literacy connections at the early childhood and elementary levels. A list of family literacy resources is included for teachers and parents. A family literacy assessment tool is appended. (Contains 22 references.) (KB)

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Effective Strategies for School Improvement

Early Childhood Education

ED 478 230

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Family Literacy Strategies: First Steps to Academic Success

by Dolores A. Stegelin

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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Family Literacy Strategies: First Steps to Academic Success

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Fifteen Effective Strategies for School Improvement and Dropout Prevention

Since 1986, the National Dropout Prevention Center has conducted and analyzed research, sponsored extensive workshops, and collaborated with a variety of practitioners to further the mission of reducing America's dropout rate by meeting the needs of youth in at-risk situations.

Students report a variety of reasons for dropping out of school; therefore, the solutions are multidimensional. The Center has identified 15 effective strategies that have the most positive impact on the high school graduation rate. These strategies, although appearing to be independent, actually work well together and frequently overlap. They can be implemented as stand-alone programs (i.e., mentoring or family involvement projects), but when school districts develop a program improvement plan that encompasses most or all of these strategies, positive outcomes will result. These strategies have been successful in all school levels from pre-K-12 and in rural, suburban, or urban centers.

Early Interventions

- Family Involvement
- Early Childhood Education
- Reading/Writing Programs

Basic Core Strategies

- Mentoring/Tutoring
- Service-Learning
- Alternative Schooling
- Out-of-School Experiences

Making the Most of Instruction

- Professional Development
- Learning Styles/Multiple Intelligences
- Instructional Technologies
- Individualized Instruction

Making the Most of the Wider Community

- Systemic Renewal
- Community Collaboration
- Career Education/Workforce Readiness
- Violence Prevention/Conflict Resolution

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A Message From the Series Editor

As a follow-up to her first monograph for this new series from the National Dropout Prevention Center/Network (NDPC/N), Dolores Stegelin has again interwoven two of the NDPC/Ns 15 Effective Strategies listed on the opposite page: Early Childhood Education and Reading/Writing Programs. The 15 strategies listed have been found to enhance student achievement and effectively produce a better high school graduation rate. These strategies are being successfully used at all levels of education from pre-K through the 12th grade, and in rural, suburban, and urban centers everywhere.

This monograph series is intentionally focused on topics of current interest and importance to educators and other readers. I recommend these for larger groups as well, such as undergraduate or graduate education classes, or even an entire school's faculty that might be seeking professional development or current research information on a topic, to have access to readings in that area. I personally intend to use these monographs in my graduate education courses.

From her first volume, which focused on developing literacy skills at the preschool level and creating successful school environments, to this current volume, which specifically looks at family literacy issues, Dolores Stegelin has done an outstanding job. Her efforts to blend and combine research and proven effective strategies to better understand family literacy issues puts the reader of this monograph in a unique position for judging literacy practices of the 21st Century. I recommend this volume, as well as Stegelin's first monograph, *Early Literacy Education: First Steps Toward Dropout Prevention*, as excellent resources for understanding literacy issues.

For a current list of available titles in this series, as well as other publications from the NDPC/N, please contact:

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—Robert C. Morris, Ph.D. Series Editor
Professor of Education
State University of West Georgia

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Foreword

There is no more important topic than family literacy in today's world, where some children enter school with literally thousands of hours of "instruction" in reading and writing while others have never seen a book or a pencil. The Literacy Learning Gap is huge, and rarely can school literacy programs close it. Dr. Stegelin presents a treasure house of ideas and strategies to help all families engage in meaningful literacy activities. Many of these activities are free. Any family can visit their local public library weekly to check out interesting culturally relevant reading materials for their children. As Stegelin says, children need to be read to *daily* from *good books*. Ask librarians for recommendations. Find cheap books at the library's book sale.

Schoolteachers can develop nightly reading programs using books from school and classroom libraries. Think of it! What would happen if every night, every child in every grade of every school in American came home with a good book that matched their culture and interests to read with their families? Access is a key issue that separates the literate from the illiterate children in our society.

Dr. Stegelin shows how any family activity can be turned into a literacy event. There are signs and advertisements everywhere. Just noticing this print motivates children to learn to read. Every family has stories to tell (and record or write down). At the end of the day invite each family member to write about one thing they would like to record for a Family Diary. All you need for family writing is paper and a writing tool. So, turn off the TV and tune in to more active literacy activities like reading and writing together as a family. This book will jump start your family literacy adventure.

—Linda Leonard Lamme, Ph.D., University of Florida

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Introduction

Family literacy programs are growing rapidly in the United States, and there are many reasons for this expansion. From 1985-1995, the number of literacy programs across the United States increased from 500 to more than 5,000 (Merina, 1995). Among the reasons for this phenomenal growth are: (a) brain research that documents the importance of the formative years for formative cognitive and mental development, (b) new knowledge on how young children learn, (c) beliefs about the effectiveness of intergenerational transfer of literacy, (d) the importance of early literacy as a dropout prevention measure, (e) the significance of the parent/child relationship that transfers to the school setting, (f) concerns with the reading and literacy skills of many parents with low education levels, (g) the documented relationship between parental educational levels and children's school success, and (h) the growth and availability of computers for families in relationship to literacy experiences (reading and writing opportunities) (Waski, Herrmann, Berry, Dobbins, Schimizzi, Smith, & Herman, 2000).

The term family literacy is a complex concept with many different definitions. Cairney (1994) defines family and community literacy as the literacy practices which occur within the context of both the family and community. The term "family" within the context of family literacy does not necessarily mean that of mother and/or father and siblings. Home environments may be influenced by a number of related and unrelated adults and children, covering two or more generations (Cairney, 1994; Barton, 1995; Paratore, 1995). Auerbach (1995) views family literacy as a participatory, empowering experience that includes a wide range of literacy practices which are used by family members daily in a way that is appropriate and socially significant to the user. The intertwining roles of emergent literacy and family literacy are being studied intensively, and definitions of emergent literacy and family literacy are varied and more elaborate than 10 years ago. Traditionally, literacy has been defined as one's ability to read and write. However, the definition of literacy is changing because of the infusion of

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technology into our lives. The types of literacy practices required in the 21st century have become extremely diverse, and the term "literacy" now includes the use of electronic devices such as computers with CD ROMS, interactive facilities and global connections, and low-tech approaches such as videotapes and audio books.

Emergent literacy is defined as ways children learn about reading and writing before they enter school and experience formal instruction. Definitions of family literacy include the multiple ways that families communicate and convey information as well as formal programs to enhance the literacy knowledge and skills of family members. There are overlapping definitions of these three phenomena: literacy, emergent literacy, and family literacy. A child who is engaged in effective and meaningful emergent literacy experiences gains even more if he/she is also involved in family literacy activities on a daily basis. The three terms are related and, together, reflect the growing emphasis on reading, writing, and numeracy strategies in the United States.

This monograph focuses specifically on family literacy. The purpose of this book is to describe and define family literacy; provide a research basis for family literacy; and then to provide concrete, effective strategies for family literacy. The book is designed to be used directly by schools and other agencies that support family literacy programs and activities.

—Dolores A. Stegelin, Ph.D.

Family Literacy Defined and Described

Vignette 1: Family Literacy and Child Care

Mrs. Callahan is a child-care provider and a grandmother. Each day she cares for four to five young children between the ages of two and five years, including two of her own grandchildren. Today she spreads the daily newspaper on the kitchen floor and two of the children put down the paint jars, water can, brushes, and paper to paint. The newspaper protects the linoleum floor and it also provides an interesting backdrop for the paint experience. As she spreads the newspaper on the floor, she says, "Oh, look! It's the comic strip section. Look at Charlie Brown's new hat. Dennis the Menace is in trouble again. What is he doing?!!" The children huddle around the comic strips and "read" them, telling Mrs. Callahan what they see and what they think each one means. After a few minutes, she reminds them that the paint is ready and that there are four different kinds of paper to paint on today. The children turn their attention to the painting activity. They chatter about Dennis the Menace . . . always into trouble over something! Mrs. Callahan reads the paper casually as she oversees the children's paint projects. She comments regularly on what she's reading as she also comments on the children's creative efforts.

What Is Family Literacy?

The term family literacy is a complex concept (Morrow, 2001) and can be described in many different ways. Following are statements that describe and define family literacy, adapted from a publication by the International Reading Association entitled *Family Literacy: New Perspectives, New Opportunities* (Morrow, Paratore, & Tracey, 1994).

- ☐ Family literacy encompasses the ways parents, children, and extended family members use literacy at home and in their community.
- ☐ Family literacy occurs naturally during the daily routines of living and help adults and children "get things done."
- ☐ Family literacy examples in the home might include using drawings or writings to share ideas; writing shopping lists or gift lists; composing notes or letters to communicate messages; keeping records; making lists; following written directions; or sharing stories and ideas through conversations, reading, writing, and storytelling.
- ☐ Family literacy may be initiated purposefully by a parent or may occur spontaneously as parents and children go about the business of their daily lives.
- ☐ Family literacy activities and events reflect the ethnic, racial, and cultural heritages of the families who are involved.
- ☐ Family literacy events can take place outside of the home in such places as schools, the public library, churches, or other community agencies and institutions. These family literacy activities are often intended to support the acquisition and development of school-like literacy behaviors of parents, grandparents, children, and other family members.
- ☐ Examples of family literacy activities by outside institutions include such activities as family storybook reading, completing homework assignments, writing essays and reports, working toward a GED, and other shared adult-child activities.

Descriptions of Family Literacy Activities

One of the best ways to understand family literacy is to read about specific activities in home and institutional settings that are typical examples. Following are several examples of family literacy activities.

Family Literacy Example 1: Saturday Shopping Lists and Favorite Movies

It's Friday evening and everyone has finished dinner. Mom gets three list pads from the kitchen drawer along with two pencils and one ink pen. "Here, Susan. Take this pad and write down everything you and Tommy need from Wal-Mart this week. Do you need more pencils for school? What about birthday gifts for Marcy and Amanda's birthday party on Wednesday? Tommy, do you need more glue for school? Write everything down . . . help each other out so you don't forget anything." Susan and Tommy take the list pad and a pencil and begin making their shopping list. They are lying on their tummies on the living room floor. Susan is 10 and writes well while Tommy is only four but can "write" his own list and make up his own alphabet letters. They do this every Friday evening, so they look forward to making their own list that is different from Mom's. It takes Susan and Tommy about 30 minutes to write everything down.

Mom and Dad begin their grocery list, with Dad looking over the contents of the refrigerator and pantry while Mom writes down each item. "Wow, can't believe we're out of cereal again! Oh, we need some crackers and some canned vegetables. Remember to get more oatmeal; we only have one more packet." Mom and Dad are used to this routine, also. Making their complete list takes about 30 minutes, and they laugh each week as they "measure" the length of their grocery list. Wow, this one isn't too bad . . . only four inches long," says Dad. "We can probably get by for under a hundred this week!"

Karen is 15 and Mark is 12. They are doing their own shopping list, too. They take turns each week writing down the items they need. Sometimes they argue over whose turn it is; it is one of their favorite shared activities each week. This week they have a combined list of eight items, mostly for school.

When all three shopping lists are completed, Karen gets out the family's videotapes and movies. It's her turn to choose the movie for this week. She chooses "Lizzie McGuire" and pops it into the TV-VCR. Mom sets out a bowl of fruit and some crackers. This family ritual repeats itself every Friday evening. The Smiths are effective in combining a shared family literacy task, writing out shopping lists, with another favorite family ritual, watching movies at home. Many years from now, Karen, Mark, Susan, and Tommy will look back on their early years and remember the special Friday evenings when shopping lists and watching movies took center stage.

Family Literacy Example 2: Making Holiday Greeting Cards

It's December 2nd, a Sunday, and lunch is over. Mrs. Ravanel is getting out scissors, a variety of kinds of paper (several colors of tissue paper, construction paper, onion paper, and lace doilies), markers, glue, glitter, and caption boxes from a local scrapbook store. Mary Ravanel is 37 years old and lives with her mother, Grace, who is 64. Mary is a single mother with three young children: Tim, age three; Macy, age six; and Mandy, age nine. Mary and Grace live on a tight income that combines Mary's teacher's salary with Grace's social security benefits. Mary's husband, Ron, died from a rare form of cancer two years ago. This living arrangement seems to work for everyone. With shared resources, Mary and Grace are able to live comfortably and provide the necessities for all of the children.

It's nearly time to send out holiday greeting cards, and Mary has established a family tradition of making their own greeting cards. Grace attends a synagogue and Mary and the children attend a Methodist church, so they make greeting cards that reflect all of their customs and beliefs. This year, the children want to try something new. Each one finds a favorite picture in a magazine and a favorite family photograph. Each child makes three cards for selected relatives and friends, and each card is an original! Plenty of glue and glitter are available. Mary and Grace spread a vinyl tablecloth over the big dining room table before they begin their greeting card construction. Mary pops some popcorn and Grace makes low-fat chocolate milk for everyone. Everyone identifies who will receive his or her specific greeting cards. Uncle Thomas, Aunt Susan, and Grandmother Simpson will receive cards made by Tim (Tim and Uncle Thomas play kickball every Saturday afternoon in the park). Macy and Mandy have decided to work together on their six cards, with one cutting and gluing and the other writing special words of celebration. Grandma Grace helps Tim make his cards and also creates three of her own for neighbors. Mary makes greeting cards for each of the children's teachers and writes a note of thanks to each one of them.

The greeting card adventure takes about two hours from start to finish. As each card is finished, Mary sets them in the windowsills in the kitchen to dry. The greeting cards will dry completely before they are signed and placed in large colorful envelopes that Mary found at a local stationery store. Once again, Mary, Grace, Tim, Macy, and Mandy have made memories through this family literacy activity. Each year brings a new idea or theme, and just working on the project together creates wonderful memories for each of them.

Family Literacy Example 3: Setting Up a Homework Center

Juan Hernandez moved recently to Greenville, South Carolina, where he took a job with a busy construction company. His wife, Josie, and two children, Maria, 12, and Salvador, 14, are settling into a new neighborhood and school system. Juan has an eighth-grade education and Josie has a sixth-grade education. In order to prepare for better jobs and incomes, Juan and Josie decide to enroll in the local adult education program to complete their GEDs. Maria and Salvador are enrolled in the community middle school. Everyone seems excited about this new phase in his or her lives. Their "new" home has an unfinished room over the garage, and Juan decides this would make a perfect homework center for the family. In his spare time on the weekends and after work each evening, Juan and Salvador finish the interior of the bonus room, installing several electrical outlets for their computer system, lamps, and other items.

In the homework center, Josie decides to create a light and airy work environment. She paints the walls white and finds two old dining tables at a garage sale to set up as work centers. Josie finds several large lamps at the local flea market, and Juan gets a good used computer system from his construction company's main office. To make the setting inviting, the Hernandezes hang family pictures and decorative posters and create writing centers with many different kinds of paper, pencils, and pens. They find a couple of stuffed chairs at a neighborhood garage sale. Each person makes a special area for him/herself. Every evening after dinner, the Hernandez family spend a little over two hours in the homework center. It is like a hub of activity for them, and it brings the family together in a shared and focused task. The children make a good adjustment into the new school setting, and Juan and Josie make good progress with their GED homework assignments. With this special setting, the Hernandez family achieve their academic goals as well as create a special family time on a daily basis. By finding items at garage sales, flea markets, and other low-cost places, they are able to hold down the cost of their homework center.

In summary, family literacy activities can be varied and are tailored to each family. As the make-up of families continue to change, the definition of family literacy and examples of family literacy activities will continue to change also. As illustrated above, family literacy activities can take place at home as well as in schools, libraries, and other community agencies and sites. Family literacy is just that: reading and writing activities that are shared by members of the family, regardless of what that family may look like. Family literacy activities in a Hispanic family will reflect the traditions, goals, and customs of that family and country. The common threads for these activities are reading and writing, which can include numeracy or math activities also. To make family literacy relevant and meaningful for each family, the particular profile of that family must be assessed and then their needs determined.

Rationale and Research Basis for Family Literacy Strategies

The research support for family literacy is growing steadily, especially with the use of technology in so many American homes. In fact, one of the newest areas of research in family literacy is related to use of computer-based literacy experiences and other technology-driven reading, writing, and numeracy activities. Research is also being conducted on the relationship between socioeconomic status, ethnic background, family makeup, and the access of technology-driven literacy events for families (Morrison, 2001). There is a growing concern that those families, especially minority and poorer families, are less able to have access to computers and other technology-based literacy activities.

According to Leichter (1984), families influence literacy development in three ways: (a) interpersonal interaction, (b) physical environment, and (c) emotional and motivational climate. When we talk about interpersonal interactions, we are describing the literacy experiences shared with a child by parents, siblings, and other individuals in the home. The physical environment includes all of the literacy materials available in the home, such as magazines, books, Bibles and other religious reading materials, videotapes, audiotapes, professional journals, newspapers, children's books and magazines, and any other item that can be used to support reading and writing. The emotional and motivational climate comprises the relationships among the individuals in a home, especially as reflected in the parents' attitudes toward reading and writing and their own goals for their children's literacy achievement. A high correlation exists between storybook reading by the parents and literacy learning of their children (Edwards, 1995), and educators believe that expanding family literacy activities like storybook reading can be a major dropout prevention strategy.

Some researchers dedicate their professional lives to better understanding family literacy experiences and the factors that influence these experiences. Several researchers have focused on homes in which children read and write early without direct instruction (Morrow, 1983; Neuman, 1997; Teale, 1984). From these research studies, certain common characteristics of homes with family literacy

experiences have been identified. What are some of these characteristics? The IQ scores of early readers in these homes are not always high but instead range from low average to above average. Parents in these homes have established routines such as reading to their children every day or evening, helping their children with their homework on a daily basis, and engaging in literacy activities themselves such as reading a newspaper every evening. Many different kinds of literacy materials are found in these homes, such as novels, magazines, newspapers, and work-related information. In other words, reading and writing materials are found in these homes with high levels of family literacy activity. Parents in these homes frequently take their children to the community library, the church library, and to school-sponsored library events.

Another important characteristic of these homes is the attitude toward reading and writing. In homes with effective family literacy strategies, both adults and children learn to love reading and writing, and they associate books and reading with pleasurable experiences and feelings. In addition, these families tend to be fairly well organized, and parents incorporate literacy experiences into the daily living routines. Making shopping lists and "to do" lists for household chores, for example, are seen in these homes. These family-literate homes provide a setting where interactions between adults and children are socially, emotionally, and intellectually conducive to literacy interest and growth (Holdaway, 1979).

Other characteristics of homes rich with family literacy include educational level of the parents and family size. However, parent educational level, their specific occupations, or even their socioeconomic status (income level) are not as important as having a literacy-rich environment. Families of children with early reading and writing skills tend to be smaller, and children with an early interest in reading and writing tend to spend playtime at home writing and drawing with paper and crayons or looking at books. The amount and quality of television viewing is also associated with literacy skills. Parents in homes with higher levels of family literacy enforce more rules for selecting and limiting television viewing. These children, in turn, are rated by their teachers as higher than average in social and emotional maturity, work habits, and general school achievement. They also tend to perform better on standardized readiness tests (Applebee, Langer, & Mullis, 1988; Morrow, 1983; Sticht & McDonald, 1989).

Even Start: An Exemplary Family Literacy Model

During the 1980s, policymakers began to realize that literacy programs were not making any great effect in the families' lives, nor were they reducing the dropout rate. Based in part on the successful Parent and Child Education program in Kentucky, Even Start Family Literacy was authorized as part of Chapter I of the Improving America's School Act in 1988. The grants required local institution's matching funds and are allocated for family-centered education programs that involve parents and children in a cooperative effort to help parents become full partners in the education of their children, to assist children in reaching their full potential as learners, and to provide literacy training for their parents. Even Start programs are funded in all 50 states and Puerto Rico. Even Start includes adult education, early childhood education, and parent education. Most programs also include PACT (Parents and Children Together) time as part of regular learning activities. Program staff teach parents how to read to their children, literally how to "play" with children, and how to use things commonly found in the home as educational toys. They also encourage and facilitate regular involvement of the parents in the school and with their children's teachers.

Research Outcomes

Follow-up research on Even Start Family Literacy programs indicate the following outcomes for participating families:

- ☐ Increased levels of daily reading routines in the home
- ☐ Increased levels of daily writing routines in the home
- ☐ Increased levels of parental involvement with their child's teacher
- ☐ Increased levels of parental involvement in their children's homework

Factors That Promote Family Literacy

American homes vary a great deal depending on the ethnic background of the family, the socioeconomic status and educational background of the parents, and other socioenvironmental factors. Many homes, however, do have consistent variables that can facilitate family literacy experiences. The following suggestions are made for those homes in which school-like literacy activities can be a comfortable part of the home environment and schedule. The assumption is also made that the parents have an educational level that is supportive of family literacy and the ability to provide enough literacy-related materials to extend and support children's reading and writing.

Materials for Reading and Writing in the Home

Family literacy activities are supported through the availability of many different kinds of materials in the home that engage the parents and children in reading, writing, numeric, and word-processing activities. Families with high levels of family literacy involvement include such items as (a) books of all kinds for children (cardboard, plastic, cloth, paper, and others) as well as books for adults; (b) magazines for both adults and children; (c) newspapers; (d) home movies, videotapes, and audiotapes; (e) computer-based materials for word processing, drawing, game playing, and story writing; (f) tablets, computer paper, construction paper, paper of different textures, cloth, and other materials on which to draw and write; (g) a variety of sizes of unlined white paper is preferable for infants, toddlers, and very young children; (h) pencils, markers, crayons, chalk, colored pencils, and other writing utensils; and (i) manipulatives such as magnetic, felt, or wooden letters are also useful.

Storage of materials for reading and writing is important and does not need to be expensive. For example, decorated cardboard boxes, plastic and vinyl containers, shoeboxes, baskets, and other creative spaces can be used. Accessibility to the literacy materials is very important so that children can begin to feel some ownership in the family literacy process. Where materials are stored varies according to each family's available space and needs. For example, some homes have large family rooms where literacy centers can be established, while other homes are small and placing the materials in drawers, in baskets under the dining room table, or in flat storage boxes under the bed may be helpful suggestions.

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Daily Routines That Support Literacy

One of the most important factors related to high-quality family literacy experiences is the scheduling of events that engage family members in reading and writing. Research indicates that children who are read to regularly by parents, siblings, or other individuals in the home, and who have parents who are habitual readers themselves, become early readers with a natural interest in books (Teale, 1984). Research suggests that teachers should encourage parents to read to their children daily (Morrow, 2001) and that includes newborns, infants, and toddlers.

Routines need to be established that regularly involve children and their parents in daily reading and writing. For example, storytelling or book sharing every night before bedtime is an excellent way to incorporate literacy into the daily routine. Through frequent story readings, children become familiar with book language and realize the function of written language. In addition, children develop positive attitudes and dispositions toward books and reading; story readings are almost always pleasurable, and that builds a desire for and interest in reading (Cullinan, 1992). Continued and regular exposure to books develops children's vocabularies and sense of story structure, both of which help them learn to read later in school. Besides storytelling and book sharing, the verbal interactions between parents and children are also quite important. This interaction offers a direct channel of information for the child and thus enhances literacy development. When parents read to their children they can engage in several different types of verbal interactions such as questioning, scaffolding (modeling dialogue and responses), praising, offering information, directing discussion, sharing personal reactions, and relating concepts to their own personal life experiences (Edwards, 1995; Taylor & Strickland, 1986). An example of a story reading between a mother and her four-year-old daughter follows (adapted from Morrow, 2001, p. 65):

Mother: Are you ready for our story today, Mandy? I found this book at the library on the way home from work today.

Mandy: *(points to the title on the front cover)* Hey, what's this?

Mother: That's the book's title. It says "Bella and the Six

Puppies." That's the name of the book. See, it's right here, "Bella and the Six Puppies."

Mandy: *(long pause, then points to the words)* "Bella and the Six Puppies."

Mother: Right, you read it. See, you know how to read!

Mandy: It says "Bella and the Six Puppies." (*points again with her finger)*

Mother: You read it again. Wow, you really know how to read!

Mandy: Um, now read the book and I'll read it to you, too.

Who *should* read regularly to children? Fathers, mothers, grandparents, babysitters, and older siblings should all read to younger children. Reading rituals should be established and maintained; this can be a special time of bonding and shared pleasure by both the adult and the child. Reading before going to sleep has a calming effect, and it establishes a routine that the child is likely to continue on her own: reading before bedtime. Spontaneous readings are also encouraged, and if this is easier for the parent's schedule, then it is better than not reading at all. Ideally, a mix of both routine and spontaneous reading should be a goal in homes that promote strong family literacy experiences.

Regular Writing Routines

Another important literacy routine is writing. In fact, some research indicates that young children learn to read more readily if they also have the opportunity to scribble, experiment with the alphabet letters, and write as their parents model or demonstrate. Parents need to communicate with their children in writing as often as possible. Examples are magnetic and message boards in the kitchen to write daily messages to each family member; shopping lists and notepads for keeping up with family and school needs; and telephone pads by each phone to take notes and keep track of each other's calls. Parents can engage even very young children in daily writing routines such as making shopping lists, having the child "write" their own grocery list while mom writes hers. Writing down the menu for dinner or a special holiday feast is another example. Children can learn early the value of "to do" lists and other lists that facilitate the daily routines or tasks of the household.

Environmental Print in the Home

Environmental print surrounds and holds meaning for all of us. Young children learn a great deal from environmental print, which can be a natural source of reading. What is environmental print? Environmental print is print that is seen randomly throughout the indoor and outdoor environment. It includes street signs, labels, nametags, billboards, store names, and thousands of other examples of items that are seen in the daily routines of life. Children begin to read and ask about environmental print probably before they are interested in more formal forms of print, such as books and magazines. If parents are aware of the importance of environmental print, they can take advantage of this opportunity to "teach" their child about reading spontaneously. Examples of environmental print in the home include the telephone book, the address book, catalogs, bills, greeting cards, newspapers, magazines, religious reading materials, cookbooks, television guides, advertisements, cereal boxes, vitamin bottles, detergent containers, and food packages.

Outdoors, parents can point out examples of environmental print such as street signs, names on mail boxes, names of fast food restaurants and well-known chain stores, billboards, traffic signs, and many other examples of print in the outdoor environment. Even a toddler can recognize "M—C—D—O—N—A—L—D—S" after a few visits and adults pointing out these letters. Children learn quickly through environmental print, and they soon learn to associate meaningful life experiences with certain print or labels, such as the family's favorite Mexican food restaurant. Environmental print can be an entertaining experience during family outings and vacations, as children look for certain alphabet letters, words, or other identified literacy goals.

Family Literacy Assessment Strategies

Above are some examples of family literacy activities. But how can families determine if they are really involved in authentic family literacy activities? How can parents relate to this concept? Here are some examples. Families can take time to check off whether or not they are including these kinds of activities in their own home:

- ☐ *Do you have daily routines that require all family members to participate in writing, drawing, or talking systematically?*

  Examples:

  - ☐ Making grocery lists
  - ☐ Drawing pictures of "what you mean"
  - ☐ Writing letters to relatives who live far away
  - ☐ Making a phone call each weekend to at least one relative
  - ☐ Keeping a family journal and taking turns writing in it
  - ☐ Keeping a family photo album with accompanying narrative
  - ☐ Doing crossword puzzles each day or on the weekend
  - ☐ Reading the Sunday comics and cutting out a favorite one
  - ☐ Writing messages to each other on a message board or a pad on the refrigerator
  - ☐ Keeping records on family activities or purchases
  - ☐ Videotaping older relatives at family reunions and recording their dictated stories or telling of family history

- ☐ *Do you schedule regular family outings to local sites that will promote literacy development, such as school and community libraries, art and historical sites, children's museums, and other sites of significance (these will vary from one geographical location to another)?*

  Examples:

  - ☐ Saving Saturday morning for breakfast and a family outing to the library

- ☐ Designating one weekend a month for visiting a local site of interest
- ☐ Checking out videos from the local library and viewing them as a family and then using them for family discussions (historical or political videos)
- ☐ Purchasing a disposable camera for each child so that he/she can maintain a photographic log of family outings and record in an album
- ☐ Taking the bus as a family and traveling to a local museum, sports event, or community celebration and recording the event with photos and captions

Morrow (2001) provides a helpful list of items for parents to check off to further determine if their family is maximizing family literacy events. Parents and teachers can use these checklists to assess how family literacy strategies are being implemented in a specific home setting.

Family Literacy Materials Checklist

- ☐ Do you have a designated space at home for books and magazines for both the children and the parents?
- ☐ Do you subscribe to a magazine for your child?
- ☐ Do you place books, journals, and other reading materials throughout the house, for example bathrooms, family room, and bedrooms?
- ☐ For younger children, do you have puppets, felt boards, dolls, and story tapes available so that children can extend the stories in their own way?
- ☐ Do you have writing areas throughout the house that include pencils, pens, markers, crayons, and a variety of types of paper?

Parent-Child Activities Checklist

- ☐ Do you read or look at books, magazines, or the newspaper with your children and then talk with them about the content?
- ☐ Do you visit the library on a weekly or regular basis and make this a family event?
- ☐ Do you talk about grandparents, family stories and historical events, and work to create a sense of history within your own family?
- ☐ Do you model a love of reading by reading a newspaper daily and subscribe to magazines for yourself?
- ☐ Do you invite your child to make shopping lists with you?
- ☐ Do you visit local museums and libraries and then discuss what you saw?

- ☐ Do you keep a family journal during vacations and then add photos to document your shared activities?
- ☐ Do you visit aging relatives in nursing homes or assisted living centers and record histories of their earlier experiences?

Modeling Positive Attitudes and Dispositions Checklist

- ☐ Do you reward your child's reading efforts by focusing on the process itself rather than how accurately the child read a particular story?
- ☐ Do you place your child's work on the refrigerator door and other strategic places throughout the home so that your child feels recognized for his/her work?
- ☐ Do you visit your child's classroom on a regular basis and participate as a volunteer in his/her classroom?
- ☐ Do you include literacy-related activities during family vacations, such as stopping by a city library or going to an art gallery and bringing artifacts, brochures, and other items for souvenirs?

Characteristics of Homes Supportive of Family Literacy

Parents sometimes underestimate the effect they can have on their children's literacy development. Sometimes, parents feel inadequate or assume that teaching their children is the sole responsibility of the school. Therefore, parents are sometimes surprised at just how much they are already doing to support their child's reading and writing skills. As noted earlier, according to Leichter (1984), families influence literacy development in three ways: (a) through interpersonal interactions, (b) through the physical environment, and (c) through the emotional and motivational climate. Interpersonal interactions are those interactions between the parent and the child that encourage reading and writing, such as regularly reading books together, reading to the children each night before bedtime, and similar routines. The physical environment refers to the room arrangements, books, and other resources and materials that are made available to children as they grow up and interact in the home environment. Examples include the availability, quantity, and quality of books throughout the home, creating a library area that is quiet and conductive to reading, and making writing materials and tools available even for very young children.

The emotional and motivational climate refers to the attitudes and dispositions that are demonstrated by the parents. For example, being excited that the Sunday newspaper has arrived is modeling a positive attitude toward print and reading. Rewarding their children for reading a certain number of books and creating a reward system such as a trip to McDonalds is another example. Finally, parents who read on a daily basis are quietly setting a powerful model for their children. These are all examples of things that parents can do that positively influence their children's attitudes toward reading and help to create a positive disposition for school and learning.

Other characteristics of homes that encourage and support early literacy development include the following:

- ☐ Pencil and paper tasks are made available for all ages of children and children are invited to assist in making grocery lists, maps, and other tasks.
- ☐ Parents read to the children on a regular and predictable basis, and books are available for infants, toddlers, preschoolers, and older children.
- ☐ Writing is encouraged, even for very young children, and a variety of tools for writing (crayons, markers, pencils, chalk, etc.) as well as different kinds and textures of paper are available at several stations throughout the house.
- ☐ Parents themselves read a wide variety of materials—books, magazines, journals, novels, newspapers, work-related materials, and so on.
- ☐ Reading and writing materials are found throughout the entire home, not just restricted to one area. Thus, reading and writing is infused into the daily routine in these homes.
- ☐ Visits to the library are a regular part of the weekly schedule.
- ☐ Reward systems are set up by parents that encourage children to read and write.
- ☐ Settings are provided that are quiet and intimate, which invite adult/child conversations and interactions. Soft elements such as overstuffed chairs, large pillows, and soft music are integral parts of these environments.
- ☐ Parents intertwine playtime with reading and writing, and they create play environments that include reading and writing materials and tools.
- ☐ Television and video viewing is restricted or limited in these homes, and children are encouraged to use their free time in activities related to reading, writing, and other thinking activities.

- ☐ Board games and other family activities that promote verbal interaction, problem solving, and creative thought are also more common.
- ☐ Parents in these literacy-rich home environments devise creative storage of literacy materials. Trips to the department store to purchase inexpensive but colorful and creative shelving, storage units, and containers are valued and enjoyed by both parents and children.
- ☐ Parents make play items available that encourage verbal expression, acting out of emotions, and dramatic play such as puppets, dolls, and story tapes

(Morrow, 2002; Leichter, 1984; Teale, 1984; Neuman, 1997).

Parent Education Level and Family Literacy

Parents do not need to have high levels of education in order to implement these ideas. In fact, highly educated parents may be so occupied with careers and job demands that they do not take sufficient time to establish a supportive literacy environment and interactions with their children. These environments do not require a lot of money. In fact, library books and checkout materials are free of charge. Parents of all ethnic backgrounds, educational levels, and socioeconomic status can be successful in creating the literacy environments that are described above.

Suggestions to Parents for Reading to Their Children

As a graduate student in early childhood education, the author had two young children—one an infant and the other a kindergartner. The first child had been read to extensively, but not until he was around 18 months of age. He developed into an avid reader and book lover. During her doctoral program, the author learned about the value of reading to infants and participated in a 30-month study of mothers reading to infants. On a firsthand basis, the author came to appreciate the value of immersing even newborn babies in storybook reading and the sharing of nursery rhymes! Here are suggestions for parents, older siblings, caregivers, relatives, and other adults in reading to young children, based on research by Morrow (2001); Schickendanz (1986); McGee & Richels (2000).

Infants Through Primary Age

Newborn infants:
Use storytelling as a comforting and soothing activity. Look for signs that the infant is staring at pictures or just listening. If he or she seems disinterested or upset, save the book sharing until another time.

3 to 9 month olds:
Infants at this age are capable of some focus, may actually want to touch or grab the book, put it in their mouths, or engage in other ways. As they mature, the level of involvement and ability to listen will increase. Books for children of this age should be sturdy, clean, and durable. They may be heavy cardboard or even washable vinyl. By repeating the same nursery rhymes and simple stories, babies begin to show a preference for certain rhythms in reading, voice fluctuation, and story events (the author remembers her infant daughter becoming very excited in anticipation of the "This little piggy went to market" nursery rhyme!).

1-year-olds:

By one year, the infant who has been read to consistently can be very involved in book sharing. Turning pages, anticipating special turning points within the story, laughing aloud or showing curious anticipation are all parts of the story sharing for this age.

15- to 18-months:

The young toddler who has been read to consistently now knows how to hold the book properly, how to turn pages appropriately, and even begins to understand the parts of a story."beginning," "middle," and "end." They like to carry books around as they become more mobile, share the stories with the family cat or dog, "read" to older brothers and sisters, and even imitate certain characters in the story.

2- and 3-year-olds:

Older toddlers and young preschoolers become fully engaged with books. They are able to go to the library, choose a book, help to check out the book, and then take ownership of it at home. Toddlers like routines and predictability, thus choosing books like *Brown Bear, Brown Bear* or repetitive nursery rhymes are appropriate for them. They will repeat the phrases, ask questions, and request that the story be read over and over and over! Children at this age are old enough to help set up a quiet area in their rooms and perhaps one or two other places in the house. Let the child become involved with establishing the physical environment, choosing books, and setting a routine, and you'll have a budding reader!

4- and 5-year-olds:

Older preschool children are often a part of a group setting, either in a child-care setting, cooperative playgroup at home, Sunday school class, or other setting. Parents should continue to involve 4- and 5-year-olds in daily and weekly routines that encourage them to read and write. Parents can also work with the child-care teacher, director, preschool teacher, or other caring adult in the literacy process. Parents can volunteer to go into the child's group setting on a regular basis and read to the entire class or to a small group of children. Preschool children enjoy having their own parents in their care and education settings, and this level of parent involvement strengthens the home-school connection in early literacy development.

Primary age:

As children enter school, parents sometimes feel they can "let up" in their own involvement with reading to their children. However, elementary age children still love to be read to and to be asked to do the reading. Chapter books and other books of interest should be available to the children. Reading a chapter in a chapter book can be a favorite literacy activity between a parent and the young school-age child. Reading on a regular basis also opens the door to other kinds of communication, and that is becoming increasingly important as the child matures.

Intergenerational and Culturally Diverse Literacy Programs

Today's families are often separated by miles, and frequently young children barely know their own grandparents and other older relatives. One way to bridge the gap between generations and strengthen literacy development is through intergenerational programs. These programs view parents and children as co-learners and are typically characterized by planned and systematic instruction for both adults and children (Morrow, 2001). The term intergenerational refers to both parents and grandparents (or other elderly relatives) and their literacy interactions with children. In these programs, either the parents or elderly adults spend time with young children, read to them, and engage in constructive interactions. These intergenerational programs serve many purposes: (a) they bring together the young and the adult, including the elderly; (b) they provide meaningful activities for the elderly who still want to contribute to society; (c) they increase the adult/child ratio in child-care settings, thus enriching these settings for everyone involved; (d) they increase the child's understanding of the older adult and their understanding of life as it was experienced by the elderly; and (e) they provide an avenue for literacy development because they provide time and materials for reading and writing interactions between the young and the old. Intergenerational programs are springing up across America, and parents can enrich their children's lives by seeking out one of these programs and getting their children involved. Some resources for intergenerational literacy programs are listed in the box.

Information Resources for Family and Intergenerational Literacy Programs

- ☐ The Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy
  1112 16th Street, NW, Suite 340
  Washington, DC 20036
  www.barbarabushfoundation.com
- ☐ National Center for Family Literacy
  Waterfront Plaza, Suite 200
  325 West Main Street
  Louisville, KY 40202-4251
  www.famlit.org
- ☐ Even Start Compensatory Education Programs
  U.S. Department of Education
  400 Maryland Avenue, SW
  Washington, DC 20202
  www.evenstart.org

Multicultural Dimensions and Family Literacy

Demographics in the United States point to increasing ethnic and linguistic diversity in families and schools. Indeed, the projections are for a number of minority groups to flourish with no distinctive majority ethnic group. Therefore, planning for family literacy activities must take this into consideration. Providing books, reading materials, and communication avenues that reflect the growing ethnic populations is critical. Teachers should work with individual parents to determine if special linguistic needs exist. The positive aspects of a culturally diverse classroom far outweigh the challenges of meeting the needs of all of the children and parents of that classroom. Below are factors to consider in establishing a family literacy program that addresses ethnic and linguistic needs (adapted from Morrow, 2001, p. 80).

- ☐ Respect and understand the diversity of all of the families you serve.
- ☐ Learn about the home languages used within the surrounding community so that materials can be translated and understood.
- ☐ Take a positive perspective; family literacy programs serve to enhance and celebrate the family, not to "fix" them.
- ☐ Provide communications (newsletters, posters, notes) in both English and Spanish and other languages that reflect the children in your classroom.
- ☐ Take into consideration the work schedules of all parents and hold meetings, special events, and workshops at varied times during the day.
- ☐ Provide child care and refreshments at the meetings.
- ☐ Use creative and varied ways to teach literacy strategies to the families in your classroom. Engage both parents and children actively in your planned activities.
- ☐ Provide time that is focused just on the children, time for the parents alone, and time for shared literacy experiences between the parents and children.
- ☐ Provide handouts and other concrete items for parents to take home to extend literacy activities in the home setting.
- ☐ Provide parents with resources related to job hunting, GED opportunities, and other life skills and functional literacy needs.
- ☐ Develop literacy activities that begin in the classroom and then are carried over to the home setting. Examples include making family photo books, scrapbooks, journals, videotapes, and family histories.

Parent-School Literacy Connections: Strategies for Family Literacy

Teachers in early childhood and elementary class rooms play a pivotal role in supporting and expand ing family literacy activities. These teachers need to view parents as partners in the development of literacy, and every teacher has the responsibility to inform parents of the students in their classroom of school activities, how they can support their child in his/her school efforts, and how they can extend family literacy activities in the home setting. How teachers view parents within the classroom setting is an important factor in forming the school-home family literacy connection. Parents should be made to feel comfortable in their child's classroom, informed of the weekly happenings of the classroom, and supported in their efforts to help children with homework, reading, and other school-related activities (Morrow, 2001).

An excellent model for home-school connections and parent involvement is the Reggio Emilia early childhood program of Northern Italy (Edwards, Gandini, & Forman, 1992). In these community-based schools, parents are instrumental in (a) planning the curriculum and daily learning activities of the classrooms, (b) being engaged in playground and outdoor projects, (c) taking responsibil- ity for fundraising and the financial well-being of the schools, and (d) working in the classrooms along with teachers as teaching partners. Many ideas from the Reggio Emilia schools are appropriate for family literacy involvement in American schools. Teachers and parents are encouraged to read literature on the Reggio Emilia schools to better understand the strong parent involvement in both the philosophy and activities of the schools.

In terms of specific strategies for parent involvement in the school classroom, here are specific suggestions on ways to make parents an integral part of the school (Morrow, 2001).

- ☐ Invite parents into the classroom at the beginning of the school year and at strategic times throughout the school year. Make them feel welcome and incorporate them into specific roles within the classroom such as book sharing, tutoring, and field trip helper.
- ☐ Send home a newsletter that informs the parents of each new topic or unit of instruction and gives them suggestions on how to adapt these ideas in the home setting.
- ☐ Invite parents to school for informational conferences, assessment workshops, parent meetings about curriculum decisions, parent conferences, and school programs sponsored by the students.
- ☐ Use several communication strategies with parents that keep them informed of the classroom's activities. These can include newsletters, email lists, telephone lists and trees, personal notes to individual children and parents, and even closed circuit television.
- ☐ Provide lists of developmentally appropriate literature for parents and their children. These books can be found at local, community, and church libraries.

- ☐ Send home activities for parents and children to do together often. Require some feedback from the parents or child about working together. Include activities such as writing in journals together, reading together, visiting the library, writing notes to each other, making grocery and shopping lists together, cooking together, making recipe books together, putting together family albums, taking vacations and day trips together to museums and libraries, and sharing television programs together (Morrow, 2001, p. 72).
- ☐ Share parent-child projects in the classroom or on the playground.
- ☐ Plan intergenerational literacy events that include grandparents, aunts, uncles, and other special adult relatives who participate in scheduled activities with the child.
- ☐ Offer special events that focus on cultural or ethnic themes, potluck suppers, and entertainment. Parents provide the manpower for planning and carrying out these special events. Examples are holiday suppers in which each family brings a favorite dish and parents provide entertainment.
- ☐ Devote theme night evenings to different topics, such as other countries, where children and parents can learn together. Families share artifacts and then read, write, and do art projects about this theme.
- ☐ Arrange cooking nights in which families bring a favorite book and read or tell about their favorite part. The book can be in another language, and if necessary, a translator is used so everyone can participate.
- ☐ Design a night when families bring pictures they want to share about their families. Family photo albums can be made at school and put on display for other families to share. These albums can be continued at home as an ongoing family activity (Morrow, 2001).

In summary, when teachers bond with the parents in their classrooms, many wonderful opportunities for family literacy events unfold. If parents feel welcomed and secure in their child's classroom, then they become more receptive to family literacy activities that will reinforce, strengthen, and support their child's academic development and success.

Family Literacy Resources

Every community has resources to support family literacy activities. The type of resources will depend on the unique geographic location. Typically, urban settings have more resources than rural settings. However, several community resources exist within every community in the United States. Teachers can serve as liaisons with families to identify the different available resources in the community. Below are some well-known resources that can be utilized for both home- and school-based family literacy activities and programs.

- The Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy
  1112 16th Street, NW, Suite 340, Washington, DC 20036
  www.barbarabushfoundation.com
- Even Start Compensatory Education Programs
  U.S. Department of Education
  400 Maryland Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20202
  www.evenstart.org
- Highlights for Children Parent Involvement Program
  1800 Watermark Drive
  Columbus, Ohio 43215.
- International Reading Association
  800 Barksdale Road, PO Box 8139
  Newark, DE 19714-8139
  www.reading.org
- National Center for Family Literacy
  Waterfront Plaza, Suite 200
  325 West Main Street
  Louisville, KY 40202-4251
  www.famlit.org
- Reading Is Fundamental (RIF)
  600 Maryland Avenue, SW, Suite 600
  Washington, DC 20024
  www.rif.org

Books for Parents

- ☐ *Beginning Literacy and Your Child: A Guide to Helping Your Baby or Preschooler Become a Reader*
- ☐ *Make the Reading-Writing Connection: Tips for Parents of Young Learners*
- ☐ *Explore the Playground of Books: Tips for Parents of Beginning Readers*
- ☐ *Library Safari: Tips for Parents of Young Readers and Explorers*
- ☐ *Making the Most of Television: Tips for Parents of Young Viewers*
- ☐ *See the World on the Internet: Tips for Parents of Young Readers— And Surfers* (Booklets and brochures available from the International Reading Association, 800 Barksdale Road, PO Box 8139, Newark, DE 19714)
- ☐ *Raising a Reader, Raising a Writer: How Parents Can Help* (Brochure from the National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1509 16th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20036)
- ☐ *Choosing a Children's Book* (Brochure available from the Children's Book Council, Inc., 568 Broadway, Suite 404, New York, NY 10012)

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Appendix A: Family Literacy Assessment Tool

How can families determine if they are really involved in authentic family literacy activities? Here are some examples that can be copied directly to use with families. Families can take time to use this Family Literacy Assessment Tool to check off whether or not they are including these kinds of activities in their own home:

☐ *Do you have daily routines that require all family members to participate in writing, drawing, or talking systematically?*

Examples:

- ✓ Making grocery lists
- ✓ Drawing pictures of "what you mean"
- ✓ Writing letters to relatives who live far away
- ✓ Making a phone call each weekend to at least one relative
- ✓ Keeping a family journal and taking turns writing in it
- ✓ Keeping a family photo album with accompanying narrative
- ✓ Doing crossword puzzles each day or on the weekend
- ✓ Reading the Sunday comics and cutting out a favorite one
- ✓ Writing messages to each other on a message board or a pad on the refrigerator
- ✓ Keeping records of family activities or purchases
- ✓ Videotaping older relatives at family reunions and recording their dictated stories or telling of family history

☐ *Do you schedule regular family outings to local sites that will promote literacy development, such as school and community libraries, art and historical sites, children's museums, and other sites of significance (these will vary from one geographical location to another)?*

Examples:

✓ Saving Saturday morning for breakfast and a family outing to the library

- ✓ Designating one weekend a month for visiting a local site of interest
- ✓ Checking out videos from the local library and viewing them as a family and then using them for family discussions (historical or political videos)
- ✓ Purchasing a disposable camera for each child so that he/she can maintain a photographic log of family outings and record in an album
- ✓ Taking the bus as a family and traveling to a local museum, sports event, or community celebration and recording the event with photos and captions

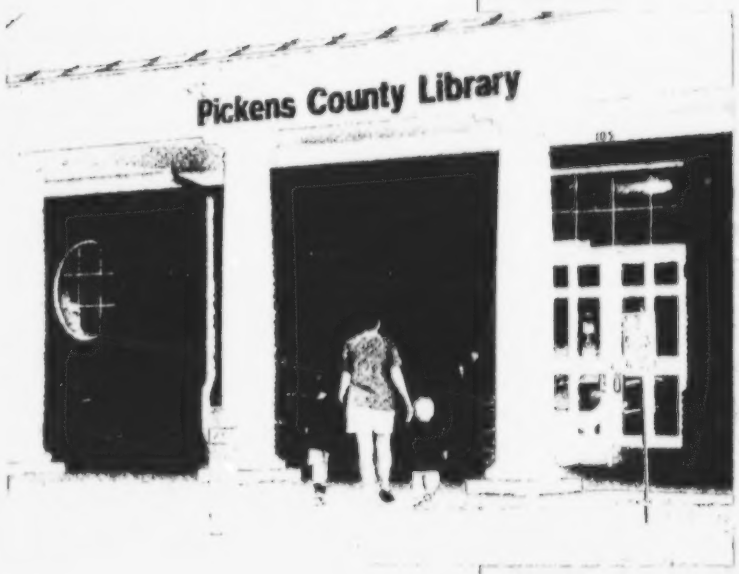
Family Literacy Materials

- ☐ Do you have a designated space at home for books and magazines for both the children and the parents?.
- ☐ Do you subscribe to a magazine for your child?
- ☐ Do you place books, journals, and other reading materials throughout the house, for example bathrooms, family room, and bedrooms?
- ☐ For younger children, do you have puppets, felt boards, dolls, and story tapes available so that children can extend the stories in their own way?
- ☐ Do you have writing areas throughout the house that include pencils, pens, markers, crayons, and a variety of types of paper?

Parent-Child Activities

- ☐ Do you read or look at books, magazines, or the newspaper with your child and then talk with them about the content?
- ☐ Do you visit the library on a weekly or regular basis and make this a family event?
- ☐ Do you talk about grandparents, family stories and historical events, and work to create a sense of history within your own family?
- ☐ Do you model a love of reading by reading a newspaper daily and subscribe to magazines for yourself?
- ☐ Do you invite your child to make shopping lists with you?
- ☐ Do you visit local museums and libraries and then discuss what you saw?

- ☐ Do you keep a family journal during vacations and then add photos to document your shared activities?
- ☐ Do you visit aging relatives in nursing homes or assisted living centers and record histories of their earlier experiences?



Modeling Positive Attitudes and Dispositions

- ☐ Do you reward your child's reading efforts by focusing on the process itself rather than how accurately the child read a particular story?
- ☐ Do you place your child's work on the refrigerator door and other strategic places throughout the home so that your child feels recognized for his/her work?
- ☐ Do you visit your child's classroom on a regular basis and participate as a volunteer in his/her classroom?
- ☐ Do you include literacy-related activities during family vacations, such as stopping by a city library or going to an art gallery and bringing artifacts, brochures, and other items for souvenirs?

Characteristics of literacy-rich homes

- ☐ Pencil and paper tasks are made available for all ages of children, and children are invited to assist in making grocery lists, maps, and other tasks.
- ☐ Parents read to the children on a regular and predictable basis, and books are available for infants, toddlers, preschoolers, and older children.

- ☐ Writing is encouraged, even for very young children, and a variety of tools for writing (crayons, markers, pencils, chalk, etc.) as well as different kinds and textures of paper are available at several stations throughout the house.
- ☐ Parents themselves read a wide variety of materials—books, magazines, journals, novels, newspapers, work-related materials, and so on.
- ☐ Reading and writing materials are found throughout the entire home, not just restricted to one area. Thus, reading and writing is infused into the daily routine in these homes.
- ☐ Visits to the library are a regular part of the weekly schedule.
- ☐ Reward systems are set up by parents that encourage children to read and write.
- ☐ Settings are provided that are quiet, intimate, and that invite adult/child conversations and interactions. Soft elements such as overstuffed chairs, large pillows, and soft music are integral parts of these environments.
- ☐ Parents intertwine playtime with reading and writing, and they create play environments that include reading and writing materials and tools.
- ☐ Television viewing is restricted or limited in these homes, and children are encouraged to use their free time in activities related to reading, writing, and other thinking activities.
- ☐ Board games and other family activities that promote verbal interaction, problem solving, and creative thought is also more common.
- ☐ Parents in these literacy-rich home environments devise creative storage of literacy materials. Trips to the department store to purchase inexpensive but colorful and creative shelving, storage units, and containers are valued and enjoyed by both parents and children.
- ☐ Parents make play items available that encourage verbal expression, acting out of emotions, and dramatic play, such as puppets, dolls, and story tapes (Morrow, 2001; Leichter, 1984; Teale, 1984; Neuman, 1997).

About the Author

Dr. Dolores "Dee" Stegelin is an associate professor of early childhood education in the Eugene T. Moore School of Education at Clemson University. She holds a doctorate in early childhood education from the University of Florida and undergraduate and master's degrees from Kansas State University. Dr. Stegelin is the author of four textbooks, numerous articles in professional journals, and is active in the National Association for the Education of Young Children, the National Association of Early Childhood Teacher Educators, the Association of Childhood Education International, and several state-level professional organizations in South Carolina. Dee's research interest in family and early literacy stems from her doctoral work at the University of Florida with Dr. Linda Lamme, her study of the home-school-community dynamics of the Reggio Emilia Schools of Northern Italy, and her work with the First Steps to School Readiness initiative in South Carolina. Dr. Stegelin works with the National Dropout Prevention Center/Network (NDPC/N) at Clemson University in their early childhood initiatives and is the associate editor of *The Journal of At Risk Issues*, published through the NDPC/N.

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